

End of Project Evaluation: “Supporting Access to Education and Psychosocial Activities for Conflict-Affected Children”

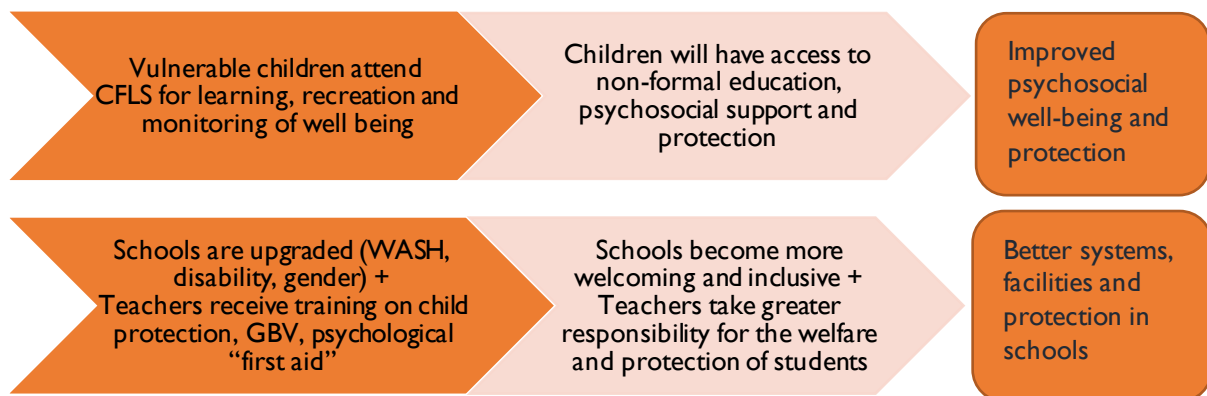


In January 2018, ██████ estimated that three million Iraqi children had halted or disrupted education as a result of violence, occupation and displacement since 2013. This disruption has affected their right to learn, their future productivity as adults and their current opportunities, participation and stimulation as children, adolescents and youth. Of displaced families remaining within Iraq, an estimated 97% are in the Kurdish Region of Iraq (KRI) or the disputed governorate of Kirkuk.

The project ‘Supporting Access to Education and Psychosocial Activities for Conflict -Affected Children’ ██████ aimed to reduce the effects of displacement and disruption to education for children living in Kirkuk, Iraq, through support to Child-Friendly Learning Centres (CFLS) and schools in vulnerable neighbourhoods.

CFLS had previously shown positive results for children’s learning and psychosocial wellbeing in camp settings. This was the first time WV KRI had used the approach in an existing (host) community. Operating from June 2016 to October 2017, the project built on World Vision’s previous experiences in KRI as part of a long-term strategy for the protection and education of children affected by the Iraq crisis, the “Children in Emergencies” program.

Here, children from diverse backgrounds suffered under the same vulnerabilities caused by limited resources, under-served infrastructure and overstretching of the government’s education systems. In response, WV KRI designed a project of **two pathways**, that would strengthen learning and protection opportunities for children living in Kirkuk’s communities:



The **Project** had the **objective**: “Internally displaced person” (IDP) and vulnerable host community children in Kirkuk have access to quality, safe and protective learning opportunities that promote their psychosocial well-being and protection.”

Evaluation Methodology

The evaluation used theory-based (see graphic) analysis to determine social change outcomes for children in the context of Kirkuk. The project evaluation tests this program logic, asking: To what degree are the assumptions in the design valid? If there are discrepancies between intentions in theory and experiences in practice, where does responsibility lie. To test the assumptions, the evaluation will apply mixed methods to data collection and analysis. Strong quantitative data on

knowledge, attitudes and practices already exists for three timepoints, using appropriate confidence intervals for systematic sampling of project beneficiaries. This is to be compared with qualitative survey and interviews, purposively sampling from people associated with the project, and aiming for a full range of viewpoints: Children, parents, teachers, government, project staff and partners.

The evaluation will also include standard considerations of program quality: the project’s relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability and impact. Given the extreme vulnerabilities faced in this setting by people from all backgrounds, equity is also likely to be a key area of learning.

Strengths and achievements: The evaluation found

- CFLS activities and facilitation led to better social cohesion among children, because they were mixing together in a safe, inclusive environment for the first time.
- CFLS led to strengthened child protection, because children knew better what to do, and social workers were able to talk to children's families about specific rights and needs.
- CFLS increased confidence and participation of children, as evidenced through the usage and type of feedback, ownership of the centre and its activities. Flexibility of the team to listen and adapt to individual needs of children is a core component to this result.
- WASH inputs have led to safer, more comfortable and inclusive schools in the most disadvantaged areas of Kirkuk.
- Capacity building of teachers in child protection and psychosocial first aid has led to an increased awareness and response to children's individual needs by trained teachers
- CFLS has supported gender inclusion in children and young adults, not only through general communication of girls' equal rights but also through direct influence with families to encourage girls' school and CFLS attendance.

Conclusion and next steps

This project has been highly successful in achieving its set goals within a fragile context, short timeframe and volatile social fabric. The evaluation found that results of the project strongly supported the based theory.

At this stage the project has contributed to, but not met, implied goals for recovery and strengthening of institutional systems for education and child protection, namely:

- Filling a need for bridging between non-formal (NFE) and formal education (though other WV projects in camp settings are working in this way);
- Connecting with institutional child protection mechanisms and strengthening community-based networks of care;
- Institutional change in schools about how teachers work with students with behaviour challenges
- Linking the positive practices from this project (CFLS and psychosocial support in

schools) to other mechanisms in government and NGO programmes

In both pathways, however, the fragile context and the low resources of local institutions challenged handover, scale-up and sustainability of promising practices.

Recommendations

For Children in Emergencies programming

- Promote the safety, protection and inclusion results of the CFLS approach alongside those of education, to demonstrate the value of an integrated 'one-stop-shop'.
- Use Cluster networks also to plan, long-term strategies for repairing the fractured education and child protection systems in KRI.
- Continue to use the excellent accountability tools in place for early warning and action on emerging issues in a rapidly changing context.
- Anchor timepoint surveys more specifically to project inputs and to different groups (including non-participants if possible), for strengthened evidence of psychosocial and resilience support for vulnerable children.
- Ensure quality, continuous donor briefings to help understanding and flexibility in this dynamic context.
- Continue and expand the recruitment of team members with a psychosocial background and experience in similar projects, so that gaps in counselling and referral services can be met to a greater degree.

For CFLS programming

- Consider expansion of courses available to children, in line with children's feedback.
- Take a more proactive path to considering children's perspectives to inform programming; existing feedback mechanisms have not led to high levels of feeling consulted.
- Continue to share and refine the NFE initiatives for children with education and protection partners
- Develop scenarios for sustainability, for instance, handing mobile CFLS to a local partner or community group as an ongoing resource.

For support to schools programming

- Continue to seek opportunities for WASH upgrades in schools
- Within WASH, introduce disability advocacy to principals, teachers and other duty bearers, to increase the likelihood of integrated classrooms.
- Consider parenting programs at CFLS in neighbourhoods where social tensions are evident.
- Expand teacher training where possible, in partnership with the Department of Education, under a long-term strategy for teachers' increased capacity to support children's protection and psychosocial needs

